



U.S. Immigration
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News Release

OPERATION PREDATOR NETS MORE THAN 6,000 U.S. ARRESTS AND 1,000 OVERSEAS ARRESTS IN ITS FIRST TWO YEARS

-- ICE is arresting an average of 250 child sex predators per month under the initiative --

WASHINGTON, DC – Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff and Michael J. Garcia, Homeland Security Assistant Secretary for Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), today announced the two-year results of Operation Predator, ICE's comprehensive initiative to safeguard children from foreign national pedophiles, international sex tourists, Internet child pornographers, and human traffickers.

Since Operation Predator began on July 9, 2003, the initiative has resulted in 6,085 child predator arrests throughout the country – an average of roughly 250 arrests per month and eight arrests per day. While arrests have been made in every state, the most have occurred in the following locations: Arizona (207), California (1578), Florida (255), Illinois (282), Michigan (153), Minnesota (190), New Jersey (423), New York (367), Oregon (148) and Texas (545).

Operation Predator also has an important international component, as leads developed by domestic ICE offices are shared with ICE Attaché offices overseas and foreign law enforcement for action. To date, leads shared by ICE with foreign authorities have resulted in the arrest of roughly 1,000 individuals overseas.

Operation Predator targets four different types of violators:

1) Criminal Alien Child Sex Predators: Operation Predator evolved out of ICE's mission to find and deport illegal aliens, particularly those with criminal records. The majority of the arrests under Operation Predator – roughly 85% – have involved foreign nationals in this country whose child sex crimes make them removable from the United States. By matching immigration databases with state Megan's law directories, ICE agents have identified and arrested more than 1,800 registered sex offenders.

"With an average of nearly 250 child sex predator arrests per month, ICE's Operation Predator has emerged as one of most successful efforts ever launched to protect America's children," said Secretary Chertoff. "In enforcing the nation's immigration laws, ICE is systematically targeting those who pose the greatest threats, including criminal aliens who prey on our children."

Some recent ICE arrests involving criminal aliens who committed child sex crimes include Julio Cesar Rabago-Magana, a Mexican man who raped a four-year-old child in the basement of Mercado Central in

Minneapolis, Minn. Rabago-Magana pleaded guilty Oct. 23, 2002 to first-degree criminal sexual conduct. After serving his criminal sentence, he was arrested by ICE agents at his St. Paul home on March 3, 2005, and deported six days later. Also arrested was a Ukrainian man living in Solon, Ohio who inappropriately touched a 13-year-old mentally disabled child. Arrested on Feb. 15, 2005, the 68-year-old remains in ICE custody while his deportation proceedings continue.

To date, more than 2,100 of these foreign-born predators have been removed from the United States to their home nations. As part of this process, ICE advises the host nation governments about the criminal histories of each sex predator it is deporting to their nations. ICE also issues Green Notices through Interpol in appropriate cases. The Green Notice provides information on career criminals who have committed, or are likely to commit, offenses in several countries.

2) Internet Child Pornographers: Drawing on its cyber crime investigative expertise and assets such as the ICE Cyber Crimes Center, ICE is targeting those U.S. citizens and foreign nationals who possess, manufacture or distribute child pornography via the Internet.

“Possessing child pornography is a crime; but when those images of abuse are found in the hands of teachers, camp counselors, coaches and clerics, uncovering that crime becomes more urgent,” said Assistant Secretary Garcia. “Investigations of those persons who hold positions of trust in the community and trade in these despicable images will remain a priority for this agency.”

In one of the largest Internet child pornography cases ever conducted, ICE targeted a Belarus-based company and its affiliates that operated and processed credit card payments for 50 child pornography websites. To date, this case has resulted in 236 arrests in the United States and more than 1,000 arrests by foreign authorities acting on ICE leads. Those arrested include elementary school teachers, coaches, ministers, camp counselors, pediatricians, circus clowns, Boy Scout leaders, police officers, firefighters and others with direct access to children. Four principals of the Belarus-based company have pleaded guilty in the United States.

Utilizing ICE’s forensic expertise, the Cyber Crime Center (C3) also operates the National Child Victim Identification System. In partnership with the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) and other federal and local law enforcement partners, agents have authenticated more than 2,100 images of children in pornographic images. These authentications provide critical evidence to ensure successful prosecution of the traders and producers of child pornography, and assist in the identification of child pornography victims.

3) International Child Sex Tourists: Working cooperatively with foreign governments through ICE’s Attaché offices worldwide, ICE agents investigate American citizens who travel abroad to engage in sex with minors. ICE is also targeting individuals who come to this country to engage in sex with minors.

Thus far, ICE agents have made 14 arrests under the new child sex tourism provisions of the PROTECT Act. In one case, 85 year-old John Seljan was sentenced in March 2005 to 20 years in prison. Seljan was arrested in Los Angeles as he attempted to board a flight to the Philippines, where he allegedly intended to have sex with two Philippine girls ages 9 and 12. At the time of his arrest, Seljan was found to have pornographic materials, sexual aids, and nearly 100 pounds of chocolates in his luggage, as well as currency.

4) Child Traffickers & Smugglers: The criminal networks engaged in human smuggling and trafficking activities have become more violent and profit-driven than ever. At the same time, the victims of these organizations are often defenseless children and juveniles. Through long-term criminal investigations, ICE is aggressively targeting those organizations that traffic and exploit young people for sex.

In one of the largest sex trafficking cases ever brought under the Trafficking and Victims Protection Act, three Mexican men pleaded guilty in New York in April 2005 to forcing young Mexican women to work as prostitutes in brothels throughout the New York metropolitan area. The young women were subject to routine

physical assaults and threats to force them to commit acts of prostitution. Three other members of the Carreto organization have pleaded guilty and two additional defendants have been indicted in the ICE case.

To enhance all these efforts to protect children, ICE has formed partnerships with several non-governmental organizations, including NCMEC and World Vision's child sex tourism prevention project, to provide prevention and deterrence information to the public. ICE plans to expand these partnerships in the coming year.

Members of the public wishing to report suspicious activity may contact ICE at 1-866-DHS-2ICE or Operation.Predator@dhs.gov. Additionally, NCMEC can be contacted at 1-800-843-5678 or at www.cybertipline.com. Additional information about the operation is posted at <http://www.ice.gov>.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security, responsible for the enforcement of border, economic, infrastructure and transportation security laws. ICE seeks to prevent acts of terrorism by targeting the people, money and materials that support terrorist and criminal activities.